Washington Department of FISH and WILDLIFE

Washington Hunting News

FREE

Game Trails/Hunter News 2003

It Pays to Report Your Hunting Activity Early

Prior to 2001 the number of hunters reporting harvest or responding to harvest surveys were generally below 50%. Results of the new hunter-reporting requirement for big game in 2001 showed a definite improvement with about 71% reporting by the established deadline date of January 31. However, there were still a large number of hunters who reported late or who attempted to purchase a new 2002 hunting license but could not until they filled out the hunting report according to the June 23, 2002 data. Hunters reporting their activity for the 2002 fall hunting season showed a discouraging decline in reporting with about 66% by the January 31 deadline date. Jim Rieck, Game Harvest Data Manager stated, "Ideally, everyone would submit their hunter report and do it on time. The deadline is set so that the information can be made available to wildlife biologists, hunters and the Fish and Wildlife Commission for use in establishing the hunting seasons for the coming year." Hunter reports provide some of the most useful data for wildlife managers to evaluate game animal population status.

All deer, elk, black bear, and turkey tag holders, whether successful or not, must report their hunting season activity by January 31 following the fall hunting seasons. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is offering hunters a chance to win one of nine extra hunting tags, as a special incentive to hunters who file their hunting activity within 10 days of killing an animal and unsuccessful hunters who report by midnight January 10th. Hunters who comply will be entered into a special drawing for four (4) special elk permits and 5 statewide any deer special permits.

Jeffery Meyers of Ridgefield, Washington can attest that it pays to report hunting activity by January tenth. He was one of the lucky nine hunters who received an incentive tag as a reward for filing his hunter report on time. He said "I have spent many years trying to draw special permit tags in Washington, as well as other states. To think I received this tag for a toll free five minute phone call. This is a remarkable program. Thanks for the opportunity and keep up the good work."

The 2003 hunting season will be the third year of the reporting requirement, a move intended to improve the state's harvest statistics. The agencies new license system makes reporting relatively painless for big-game hunters. They can file harvest reports by calling a toll-free automated message line, 1-877-945-3492 or via the Internet at http://www.fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov. Hunters should have the Washington Interactive Licensing Database (WILD) number when reporting.

Jeff Meyers, winner of one of the 9 Incentive Permits with his bull elk.

New for 2003 hunters will now receive a confirmation number for each hunter report they successfully complete. The confirmation number will be an 11-digit number that is unique for each report successfully submitted. The use of confirmation numbers is designed to provide absolute assurance to hunters that their hunter report has indeed been successfully completed.

George Tsukamoto,
Staff Biologist

CORRECTIONS
to 2003-2004 hunting pamphlet

Hunters need to be aware of the following corrections to the 2003-04 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Rules pamphlet.

Page 25 lists GMU 329 & 371 as permit only but on Page 26 under Eastern Washington Mule Deer it lists all 300 GMU open to general season. It should read all 300 GMU except 329 & 371.

Page 25 lists GMU 157, 490, 522 as closed, but on page 26 the chart doesn't list GMU 157 & 490 as closed.

Page 32 reads $20.00 for Non-Resident Special Deer Permits-Second Deer "B" tag. It should read Non-Resident $200.00.

Page 38 reads Early Western Washington WM 3 pt. min. or… It should read Early Western Washington WM 3 pt. minimum or Anterless.

Page 46 Official hunting hours table reads days of hunting season as Sunday September 1 – Sunday September 8. All days listed are one day off. September 1st is a Monday not a Sunday. September 9th is a Tuesday not a Monday, etc.

Band-Tailed Pigeons Populations Show Improvement

Photo Credit Jerome Leonard

Washington's band-tail season was closed for over ten years from 1991-2001. In 2002, the three-year average index of 3.01 for 1999-01 was above the reopening level in the management plan (the 1980-84 average of 2.17). Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife reopened the season in 2002, with season dates September 15-23 and bag/possession limit of 2/4. Hunters were required to obtain a permit and submit a mandatory harvest report to participate. A total of 522 permits were issued, and an estimated 187 permit holders hunted during the season. Total harvest was estimated at 273 band-tails, with 357 days hunted (0.76/day). In 2003, the three-year average index of 2.78 for 2000-02 is above the threshold of 2.24 (1980-84 average), and a similar season has been approved.

Don Kraege, WDFW Waterfowl
Section Manager

TRIBAL HUNTING- It is our life!

How important is hunting to the Swinomish way of life? Chester Cayou Jr., a respected Swinomish tribal hunter, has a quick answer. Cayou chuckles. "It is our life," he answers. And it has been since before anyone can remember.

He and other Swinomish hunters are dedicated to preserving that way of life. Once a year, Cayou gathers a group of a dozen or so young hunters from the 800-member tribe to go on a ceremonial journey, a quest to bring back game for tribal elders and provide wildlife resources for use in traditional and sacred practices.

The meat gathered will be distributed to tribal elders and local spiritual leaders for use in religious ceremonies. No parts of the animal – not the hooves, the antlers, nor the hide – will be sold or wasted.

"In the wintertime, we use the game for longhouse ceremonies – we pow-wow every night," said Cayou, stressing that elk meat is a traditional and essential staple food. "A lot of our elders, that's all they'll eat – the traditional Indian food that we give them."

Wildlife resources have always been central to the cultures of the treaty Indian tribes in western Washington. As traditional foods, deer, elk and other wildlife remain important elements of feasts for funerals, naming ceremonies and potlatches. Hides, hooves, antlers, feathers and other wildlife parts are still used for traditional ceremonial items and regalia. Like salmon and shellfish, the tribes reserved the right to harvest wildlife in treaties with the U.S. government.

Wildlife still provides important nutrition to Indian families on reservations where unemployment can run as high as 80 percent. If a family cannot provide for themselves, tribal community hunters help. Men like Cayou plan ceremonial hunts. Glen Edwards, a Swinomish tribal council member who also sits on the tribe's fish and game commission, harvests waterfowl. They hand out game to elders who have grown too infirm to hunt, or to families without a hunter.

Edwards, who taught his own sons traditional hunting techniques and modern safety measures, taught many of the tribe's youth the same techniques. Now, these young people go on traditional hunts with Edwards and Cayou, donating the wildlife they harvest to Swinomish elders. "This food is a real treat for people who don't have hunters in their family, especially elders who grew up on wild game," said Edwards. "It's good to see these young kids taking an interest in hunting, and in donating their game."

Unfortunately, the quality and quantity of the habitat upon which the wildlife resources in western Washington depend for their survival are declining rapidly. Where virgin forests once stood there is now urban sprawl. Deer and elk herds have been squeezed into smaller and smaller areas of degraded and fragmented habitat.

Swinomish hunters now have to plan weeklong trips to find game, because harvestable wildlife has disappeared from their traditional hunting grounds. But these trips will continue, because a community and a culture depend on it.

This doesn't mean that the tribes are harvesting lots of elk: far from it. "We don't impact the resource like some people think – we just take what we need," said Edwards. "Last year, we took one elk. That's hardly anything."

Western Washington treaty tribal hunters account for only about 1 percent of the total combined deer and elk harvest in the state. According to statistics for 2001-2002, tribal members harvested only 640 deer and 307 elk – about one percent of the total deer and elk take. More deer and elk die as road-kill than are taken by tribal hunters.

Tribal hunters, Edwards says, sometimes unfairly get bad press. "If a tribal member does something wrong, it gets put in the spotlight, and all the Indian hunters are lumped together with one bad apple," said Edwards. "Some people talk about Indians commercializing hunting – that doesn't happen. If one of our hunters tried that, the hunting commission would take away that individual's hunting rights automatically."

As a sovereign government, each treaty tribe develops its own hunting regulations and ordinances governing tribal members. Many tribes work with WDFW on their regulations and harvest data.

Tribal hunters must obtain tags for each big game animal they wish to hunt and are required to report all harvest. If a tribal member is found in violation of tribal regulations, he is cited into tribal court. Penalties can include fines and loss of hunting privileges.

"Hunting was and is a way of life to us," said Edwards. "It's important to us to preserve that tradition."

Jeff Shaw,
North Sound Information Officer,
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

Western Washington Pheasant Hunting

Many people in the state of Washington enjoy the sport of pheasant hunting.

There are currently 26 pheasant release sites in western Washington with12 sites in Region 4 (Island, King, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties), 5 sites in Region 5 (Clark, Cowlitz and Lewis counties), and 9 sites in Region 6 (Clallam, Grays Harbor, Mason, Pacific, Pierce and Thurston counties).

Western Washington has less-than-ideal climate and habitat for natural pheasant reproduction and these birds find it difficult to nest successfully. Although there are some agricultural areas, the lack of grain farming and the wet, cold, spring climate doesn't result in significant natural populations. The Western Washington Pheasant Release program provides a hunting opportunity and encourages participation from young and older aged hunters. Visit the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Internet site for more detailed information on the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program at http://www.wa.gov/wdfw/huntcorn.htm.

Release sites are selected on the basis of ownership, hunting cover, safety and availability of land to hunters. The number of pheasants released on each site is based on the estimated numbers of hunters using those sites. This estimate is in part, based on permit punch card returns. That's why it is so important to return the cards.

For example in Region 4 in 2002, the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area received approximately 4,700 pheasants on the Cherry Valley, Crescent Lake and Stillwater units. On Whidbey Island, OLF-Coupeville, Sea Plane Base, Ebey Prairie/Arnold Farm and Bayview obtained about 1,550 pheasants, with the Sea Plane Base getting the bulk. The Skagit Wildlife Area, including Smith Farm, got about 4,480 pheasants; in Whatcom Co., Lake Terrell, including ARCO and Intelco release sites, received 4,150.

The releases start in late September with the Senior/Juvenile special hunt and continue until the end of November, usually Thanksgiving. Typically, birds are released five days per week in the late afternoon on the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area; however, this year with budget cuts and lower staffing levels, releases may not occur as frequently. The Skagit, Whidby Island, and Lake Terrell releases are usually made on weekends and one weekday. The Department often uses volunteers to release the birds.

The Lewis County Game Farm established in 1946 is the WDFW's one remaining pheasant rearing facility run by the State. All other facilities were gradually phased out by 1996. The objective for the game farm, after development of more facilities, will raise about 40,000 pheasant per year. The operation cost for the game farm was about $290,000 in 2000.

Some Myths and Tips on Hunting Western Washington Pheasant Release Sites.

1. *If you don't get a bird within 45 minutes the area is "all shot out."* - This assumption leads to the behavior where 70 percent of the hunters leave the field by 10:30 A.M. Many times just slowing down will result in success.
2. *If there are only a few shots fired in the first half hour, "there were no birds planted or they were all dumped in one spot."* - Throughout the history of the program, there have been very few times when birds were not released on the day scheduled. Release schedules vary from site to site.
3. Hunt slowly and give your dog a chance to swing back and forth in front of you. Do not get out ahead of your dog because you "want to beat the crowd."
4. If you complain about the crowds at 8 A.M. start your hunt at 10 A.M. Yes, there will be fewer birds, but I assure you there are still birds to be had. You just have to hunt harder and smarter for them.
5. Trust your dog, but don't walk around blind. Hunt slower in areas with heavy cover. Physically workout likely spots, or quit walking and let the dog work. Many birds get nervous and flee if they no longer can hear you walking away from them.
6. Train your dogs with pheasant scent so they know what to look for. Train dogs to keep close and ignore other dogs. A dog out more than 70 feet will flush birds for other hunters.
7. Practice on the trap range before hand, so you can hit a bird once it flushes.
8. Keep track of where other hunters and dogs are. Be a safe hunter!

Patricia Thompson, Wildlife Biologist and
Curt Young, Wildlife Area Manager

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Significant Game Management Unit (GMU) Boundary Changes for 2003

There are 137 Game Management Units (GMUs) described in the Big Game Hunting Seasons and Rules Pamphlet for 2003. The 2003 pamphlet shows that all the GMUs were changed because they are all shown in red. Not so!

Changes were made in 2003 to aid the hunter in locating GMU boundaries by using physical characteristics that are more easily identifiable such as rivers, roads, trails, etc. rather than unmarked political boundaries. In most cases the boundary descriptions were corrected or modified to accurately describe the outer boundaries of the GMU but did not significantly change the size or shape of the unit. However, there are a few exceptions that hunters need to be aware of as follows.

- GMUs 108 (Douglas) and 111 (Aladdin) are two new units created from the larger unit described as GMU 109 (Three Forks) in previous years.
- The common boundary between GMU 121 (Huckleberry) and GMU 117 (49 Degrees North) was changed to US Hwy 395 between Chewelah and Loon Lake.
- The following GMUs in eastern Washington have changed because the county line is no longer used as the boundary; 127 (Mica Peak), 139 (Cheney), 136 (Harrington), 178 (Wahluke), 284 (Ritzville formerly Kahlotus), 139 (Whitman), and 382 (East Klickitat).
- The boundary between GMU 340 (Menastash) and 371 (Alkali) was changed from the Yakima River to Interstate Highway 82.
- GMUs 245 (Chiwawa) southern boundary was changed to follow US Highway 2 between Leavenworth and SR 207. This area was formerly in GMU 250.
- GMU 250 (Swakane) was significantly reduced in size when the west boundary was relocated on SR 209 (Chumstick Hwy) from Ellensburg north to Eagle Creek Road.
- In GMU 251 (Mission) the north boundary was changed to US Highway 2 from the US Forest Service Trail 2000 (Pacific Crest Trail) to the Columbia River, which added lands previously described as part of GMU 250 (Swakane).
- GMU 503 (Randle) is a new unit created from GMU 505 (Mossyrock).
- The GMU 530 (Ryderwood) was expanded to include lands south and west of SR4, Risk Rd and Foster Rd between the Skamokawa and Elochoman rivers.
- GMU 516 (Packwood) was significantly enlarged with the entire southern and western boundary description changed.
- GMUs 558 (Marble) and 560 (Lewis River) northern boundaries were changed to form the new GMU 516 (Packwood) unit.
- The common boundary between GMU 520 (Winston) and 556 (Toutle) was moved south from SR 504 to the Weyerhaeuser 2400, 2421, 4400 lines and Johnson Creek.
- GMU 550 (Coweeman) western boundary from Ariel on the Lewis River to Ostrander now follows the Northwest Natural Gas Pipeline and the power transmission line from the Lewis River to Section 4, T5N, R2E.
- A slight change was made in GMU 504 (Stella) extending the boundary north of Dellameter Road and east of the power line west of the town of Castle Rock.
- The southern boundary of GMU 554 (Yale) was changed to include Green Mountain south of Lake Merwin.
- The common boundary between GMU 564 (Battle Ground) and 568 (Washougal) has changed significantly to address the urban/suburban interface.

The Elk and Deer Area Descriptions are all 4 digit numbers rather than three digits in previous years. This change in numbering was made to assist the hunter in locating the area. The first digit represents the administrative region where the deer or elk area is located. The maps used to describe all GMUs is the 1:100,000 scale planimetric maps available from some of the map sources listed on page 57 of the Big Game Hunting Seasons and Rules Pamphlet.

Road Closures On Some WDFW Owned Forest Lands

Based on recommendations presented to the Legislature in the form of the Forest and Fish Report of 1999 the Legislature directed the Forest Practices Board to develop new rules for forested lands designed to provide protection for aquatic resources and ensure compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act.

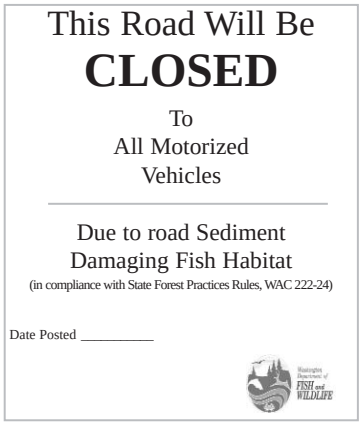
New rules in the Forest Practices Act approved in May 2001 specifically, WAC 222-24-051, require all forest landowners with 500 or more acres of forest land to develop a Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (RMAP) for all their forested land by July 2006. The RMAP requires that all forest roads be identified, their condition assessed, problems that are or pose a threat to a public resource be identified and provide a schedule of when the problems will be corrected.

WDFW owns about 96,000 acres of forested land throughout the State that have nearly 500 miles of forest road. WDFW has been complying with the new rules and has submitted RMAP's for five Wildlife Areas that amount to 40% of the total forested land Statewide. The remaining forested land continues to be assessed, plans developed and submitted on an annual basis.

Some of the road problems encountered thus far include culverts which block fish passage, roads adjacent to streams that deliver sediment to those streams, roads that are unstable or not safe and roads that need improved ditch lines for better drainage. Historically, many forest roads were constructed near streams because this was the flattest terrain and made for easy timber haul. These stream adjacent roads are sometimes the roads with the greatest number of problems and negative impact to the resource. In some such cases the best action to protect the resource and responsible use of financial resources is to close (abandon) the road to all motorized vehicle access. Requirements to abandon a road include removal of all culverts, provide sufficient cross drains (water bars), blocked to motorized vehicle access and left in a suitable condition to control erosion.

As all large forest landowners including WDFW meet the requirements of the new rules and correct resource problems, the public using roads on these forested lands will encounter road improvements; roads with little or no changes and in some cases previously open roads that have been or will be closed and abandoned to protect the resource. When possible, roads that have been identified for closure and abandonment on WDFW lands will be posted on site one year in advance.

Lonnie Landrie
WDFW Forest Road Coordinator



Signs like the above will be posted, when possible, one year in advance of a road closure and abandonment

PRIVATE FOREST LANDOWNERS FACE PUBLIC ACCESS ISSUES

It's springtime in the forest. The birds are chirping, a pileated woodpecker raps its mating song, dew glistens on the blooming serviceberry right next to that big, ugly pile of garbage left by an anonymous source.

It's no wonder more and more forestland owners in Washington State are locking their lands and posting No Trespassing signs.

Illegal dumping is just one of the many woes facing public and private forestland owners. While it's probably the most unsightly and the most likely, forestland owners report a wide variety of other activities, such as stealing both major and secondary forest products, including cedar and maple blocks; floral greens, moss and cascara; and boughs. Vandalism is a continual worry, as both equipment and the roads they're transported on are expensive to repair. Environmental damage, from elk poaching to illegal woodcutting and from quads in streams to motorcycle trails in newly reforested plantations, threatens companies' compliance with state forest practice rules and federal Habitat Conservation Plans.

Forestland owners have employed a number of solutions to these challenges. More and more gates have sprung up in areas that traditionally had unlimited access. Fee access programs have been employed by some forestland owners, while other owners completely ban motorized traffic. Security personnel have been beefed up; while expensive, this tactic has had limited success. Large forestland owners and small have struggled with this problem and will continue to do so as the population in Washington burgeons.

Simpson Resource Company, whose Washington tree farm is situated between Puget Sound and the ocean beaches, has also struggled with public access issues over the years. With public roads crisscrossing its ownership and its proximity to some of the most spectacular outdoor recreation spots in the state, public use of this privately held forestland could easily get out of hand.

Gates have been employed on the tree farm where public access has been abused. With so many public roads throughout the tree farm, locking up the land base completely would be difficult. Company officials took the view that locking up everything would result in locking out the law-abiding citizens, while trespassers would continue to find their way in. Instead, the company put together its first ever public access policy, and pledged to work with user groups to continue to find positive ways to allow access. For example, the Puget Sound Enduro-Riders, an off-road motorcycle club, runs two races annually on Simpson land. The club's trail network ran through sensitive areas and threatened to negatively impact water quality. The company could have shut Puget Sound Enduro-Riders down and banned future events from its lands. "That would have the effect of getting rid of the good guys while the abusers were still riding these trails, creating more and bigger environmental problems," said Patti Case, public affairs manager. Instead, the company is now working with the club to close some of the sensitive stretches of trail and rework other areas to higher standards. In exchange, the club continues to hold its events, and has also volunteered to clean up garbage on Simpson lands, along with the Back Country Horsemen and other volunteer groups. "These aren't the people who are illegally dumping," said Case, "but they are people whose outdoor experience is impacted by it. They have been very willing to help with cleanup on Simpson lands."

Simpson is currently working on improving its signage throughout its forestlands to ensure understanding of public access policy. "People must understand that entering an active harvest area is prohibited," said Case. It is extremely dangerous, yet we have had abuse of this simple policy." Typically, she explained, this happens because the offenders "didn't see" the signs. "We're hoping that by adding pictures and symbols and by color coding our signs, we'll be more successful in keeping people out of areas that are unsafe," said Case.

Some areas of private forestland in Washington State, traditionally open for hunting and other recreation, have been closed off in recent years to protect wildlife populations. At Simpson, these closures have been undertaken in cooperation with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and private groups such as the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Often, these areas are available for walk-in access, but motorized vehicles are prohibited.

Clearly, the issues surrounding public use of private land are legion. Some private landowners consider the public relations advantages of maintaining at least limited access are worth the challenges they contend with. For user groups, seeking partnerships with those landowners may be the key to continued access.

Simpson Resources Company

Cougar Harvest Trends

There are very few similarities between cougar hunting seasons 10 years ago and cougar seasons today. It is therefore not surprising that there are also significant differences in harvest characteristics between seasons 10 years ago versus today. What may be surprising is how these changes are impacting cougar populations.

Cougar management has been in a state of flux for about 7 years in Washington, largely due to Voter Initiative 655, which banned the use of dogs to hunt cougar in 1996. It was believed that banning the use of dogs would significantly impact cougar hunting success. With this in mind cougar hunting seasons were increased from about 3 to 71/2 months, bag limits increased from 1 to 2 cougar per year, and the cost of a cougar tag decreased from $24 to $10.

The ban on the use of dogs to hunt cougar also heightened the concerns for public safety and damage.

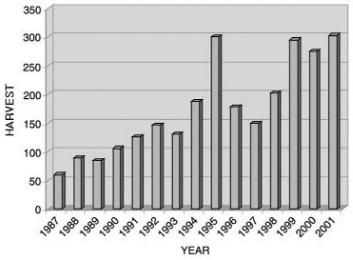


Figure 1.
Cougar harvest trends, 1987-2001, Washington.

Substitute Senate Bill 5001 was passed in 2000 allowing the limited use of dogs for cougar hunting in specific areas to address public safety issues or pet and livestock depredations.Cougar harvest has steadily increased since dogs were banned by I-655 (Figure 1). The increase is probably most attributed to the overlap between cougar seasons and deer and elk seasons, and the relatively low cost of a cougar transport tag. The changes made in an effort to maintain harvest at levels similar to when dogs were used have been successful. The reduced cougar tag and overlapping seasons made purchasing a cougar tag more attractive for deer and elk hunters, and the sales of cougar licenses increased from less than 1,000 annually prior to I-655 to about 58,000 post I-655. This in turn created a situation where the majority of the harvest is now by deer and elk hunters that harvest a cougar incidentally during their deer or elk hunt.

What's important about this is that cougar harvest shifted from a selective method (using dogs) to a non-selective method (incidental take). During seasons when dogs were legal, hunters tended to select males and larger, older-aged animals. Without the use of dogs hunters have little or no opportunity to be selective and therefore harvested more females-males (Figure 2) and a high proportion of younger cougar. We must now consider cougar seasons in terms of biological impacts to the population and their sustainability in light of public safety and damage. We now harvest more female cougar, more young cougar, and more total cougar – all of which equate to a greater impact to population growth. In short, current harvest levels appear to be reducing cougar populations because juvenile and adult female harvest have increased substantially. This isn't necessarily alarming, because reducing the cougar population in portions of Washington and maintaining stable populations in other areas is the objective, as stated in the Department's six-year Game Management Plan.

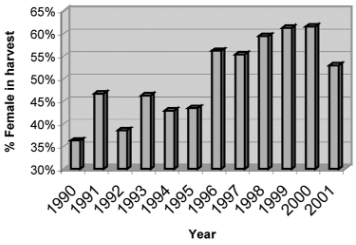


Figure 2.
Percent female in total harvest

Achieving cougar population objectives for areas like Okanogan, Ferry, and Stevens counties, where the majority of the cougar are harvested and where public safety concerns and damage complaints are high will be a focus of attention. The next task is deciding how much to reduce the population and, once that level is reached, how to shape cougar seasons in the future to maintain that level. To accomplish this the Department will be activity gathering biological data on cougar populations to guide us in shaping future cougar seasons and management direction. WDFW will seek public input and involvement over the next two years.

Donny Martorello,
WDFW Bear, Cougar, Furbearer Section Mgr.

Emerging Wildlife Diseases, An Update

Chronic Wasting Disease

With nearly 2000 deer and elk brain stems having been sampled from around the state, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife continues to believe our state is free of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Since first recognized as a clinical "wasting" condition in 1967 in mule deer in a wildlife research facility in Colorado, CWD has become a major threat to free ranging wildlife. As of March 1, 2003 CWD has been detected in free-ranging cervids in Colorado, Illinois, Nebraska, New Mexico, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Prior to movement restrictions initiated by various state agricultural departments and the United States Department of Agriculture, the movement of farmed cervids facilitated the spread of CWD.

While controversial at the time, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife took aggressive action in the early nineties to closely regulate the movement of farmed cervids. This action may well have prevented CWD from entering the state at a time when the disease was poorly understood.

In 1996, before most hunters had heard of CWD, the department began conducting "targeted surveillance" for the disease. "Targeted surveillance" consists of testing those animals showing clinical signs which could be considered consistent with CWD. The past two years the pace of testing has increased dramatically. Using brain stems collected at hunter check stations and meat processing facilities, approximately 900 deer and elk have been sampled per year. Dependent upon funding, it is our intent to continue the testing activity until 5000 animals have been evaluated.

To date, the cost of collecting, processing, and testing samples has been born by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. In April 2003 the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that it was making funding available to assist wildlife agencies in addressing CWD concerns. The costs of conducting past CWD survey work would have been nearly prohibitive were it not for the volunteer assistance which has been provided by various hunter and outdoor organizations.

At this time WDFW Director Jeff Koenings has completely closed the door on the movement of live cervids into Washington State. The one remaining avenue by which CWD could cross our state border is via carcasses brought into the state by Washington hunters harvesting animals in states in which CWD occurs. We strongly urge that Washington hunters, who harvest deer or elk in states where CWD occurs, have the meat cut and wrapped prior to bringing it into Washington. Since the infective agent causing CWD occurs in greatest concentrations in the brain and nerve tissues, these tissues should not be brought into Washington, and skullcaps should be cleansed with Clorox solution before traveling back to Washington.

West Nile Virus

State agencies, including the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), are working together to minimize public health risks from the disease. The mosquito-borne West Nile virus was first found in North America in 1999 and has since spread to most U.S. states. In rare cases it can cause a form of encephalitis in humans and be fatal. There were 4,156 U.S. instances of the virus in humans, and 284 people died in the United States in 2002, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

To date (July 2003), there have been no cases of humans acquiring the disease in Washington state. The Washington Department of Health offers more information on WNV human health issues on its website http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/Zoo/WNV/WNV.html and on its toll-free telephone line: 1-866-78VIRUS (1-866-788-4787).

Horses also can be affected by the virus. Horse owners can visit the state Department of Agriculture's website for information: http://www.wa.gov/agr/FoodAnimal/AnimalHealth.

West Nile Virus was confirmed to be present on both sides of Washington State by the end of last summer. Based on the information regarding the rapid spread of this infection in other states, we expect to see West Nile infections manifest in many parts of Washington as the summer of 2003 progresses. The lead agency for dealing with the West Nile virus problem in Washington State is the Department of Health.

The presence of dead birds in an area may be an indicator that WNV is present. Public health workers in Washington conduct dead bird surveillance from late spring to fall, when mosquitoes are most active. If you find a dead bird, or if you notice more dead birds in an area than you consider normal, please take the following actions:

- Report the information promptly to your local health department. Birds that have been dead less than 48 hours provide the best samples for testing.
- Be prepared to share information about the bird(s) such as the specific location it was found, including the distance to the nearest town, road or other landmark. Also provide your name and phone number.
- It is best to leave the bird in place on the ground and report its location. If you choose to collect the specimen, use a shovel or wear gloves to place it in two plastic bags. Keep the specimen in an ice chest or refrigerator that is not used for food or place plastic bags of ice or cool packs over the bird and cover it with a bucket. Do not handle wildlife with bare hands.

Birds serve as the host for West Nile virus, which is spread by mosquitoes to other birds and animals. According to the Centers for Disease Control, West Nile virus has been identified in 138 species of birds. Blue jays, crows, and raptors seem to be especially susceptible. West Nile does not seem to be a serious threat to pheasant, quail, chukar, waterfowl, or other hunted game bird species.

There have been reports of West Nile virus causing infections in both bighorn sheep and mountain goats in zoo's and wildlife parks. Department biologists will be closely monitoring our big horn sheep and mountain goat populations this summer in an attempt to detect any unusual mortalities. Hunters and back packers are asked to report dead big horn sheep and mountain goats to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. There have been no reports of West Nile virus related mortalities in deer or elk.

The best way to protect yourself is to avoid mosquito bites and reduce the places mosquitos live and breed around your home.

- Stay indoors at dawn and dusk if possible.
- Wear long sleeve shirt, long pants and a hat.
- Use mosquito repellant when necessary. Repellents that contain DEET are the most effective.
- Empty any standing water around your home.

Briggs Hall, DVM

GMU 342 (Umtanum) Open to Deer General Season

GMU 342 originally became a deer permit-only area in 1997. All of eastern Washington went to 3-pt minimum the same year. The intent of both "permit-only" and "3-point minimum" was to increase the buck:doe ratio. The new six year game plan calls for a minimum of 15 bucks:100 does and to increase opportunity for all users when appropriate. In December of 2002, the buck ratio in GMU 342 was 18:100 does. In non-permit areas such as GMU's 360 and 368, the buck ratio was 22-30:100 does. The number of mature bucks was also higher outside of the permit area. The antler point distribution in the GMU 342 harvest indicated few mature bucks. In 2001 (most recent data), 55% of the deer harvested were 3-point or less and no deer larger than 4 point were reported. The majority of GMU 342 deer herd is migratory and is already subject to hunting pressure during the general season. Mature bucks surviving the general season were also hunted during the permit-only season, which placed additional pressure and vulnerability during the rut. This "double jeopardy" reduced buck ratios compared to surrounding herds. Historically, about 3000 deer hunters reported hunting GMU 342. Under permit only, an average of about 175 hunted. Biologist concluded that higher hunter success did not compensate for the loss of opportunity for over 2800 hunters. More importantly the buck ratio objective was not being reached. Those that had participated in the permit hunt reported a high quality experience and favored keeping the permit only hunt. However, the majority of hunters favored returning to an open general season.

Four Point Doe

The opening Sunday of rifle season, I found myself sitting atop a sagebrush knob an hour before dawn in the heart of wheat country in Douglas County, Washington. Beside me was college buddy Todd West. Reminiscing the good ol' days and catching up on the present, we laughed together while the constellations began to disintegrate into the twilight of dawn. As the terrain began to take form with the red sky horizon, I quickly became skeptical. "Todd, this is beautiful and all, but why in the heck would any deer be out here in the middle of nowhere?" "Don't worry," he reassured me, "any minute we'll see deer popping up all around us." Then deer started to sprout up where only minutes before there were none. Minutes later more deer were spotted on the opposite side of the bowl. Glassing the ridge I spotted two large bucks. Quickly dropping to the prone position, I put the riflescope on the bigger buck. It was an enormous two point, both wide and massive. Swinging my rifle further down the ridge, I located the impressive four-pointer.

What seemed like minutes probably only took a few seconds. It was decision time. I raised the crosshairs as the buck stood broadside and motionless. Confident a good shot could be made I squeezed the trigger.

Like a kid approaching a first deer, I was ecstatic to see the beautiful, typical 5X5 rack that spanned more than 18.5 inches. Odd though, we both wondered why this "buck" hadn't rubbed its velvet off yet, especially since it was almost the middle of October. As I rolled it over ready to remove the poor deer's reason for being a buck, SURPRISE! I couldn't believe my eyes; its "buckhood" was missing. This buck was actually a doe. I remember my grandpa telling me a story of a velvety spike he had shot that ended up being a doe. So although astonished, I knew it was possible. After close inspection and pictures to document the discovery, we had both determined that the only sign of anything male was the antlers; my "bucks' undercarriage was all female.

Joe Kiefer

Joe Kiefer with his 4 point buck... I mean 4 point doe taken during the 2002 season.

Recent Changes For Disabled Hunters

WAC 232-12-828 "Hunting of game birds and animals by persons with a disability" was revised this year for hunters with disabilities to clarify some language and add some definitions at the April commission meeting. The following changes were made in the definitions section of WAC 232-12-828:

Redefined the Designated Hunter Companion role (in the distance away from the hunter with a disability when stalking, tracking, retrieving, license requirement when helping, and the clarified the tagging requirement for big game killed on behalf of the hunter with a disability).

Clarified the definition of a person with a disability under (h), (i) (ii) made it a little more restrictive by requiring the assistive device used to be "medically prescribed" which would require a doctor's signature)

Added a definition for the term "Special Use Permit" (Relates to the 232-12-054 archery special use permit for adaptive equipment, and could relate to the fishing special use permit.)

Added a definition for the term "Accompany" (which allows for up to 1/4 mile distance apart from the hunter with a disability and the Designated Hunter Companion when stalking, shooting, or tracking an animal).

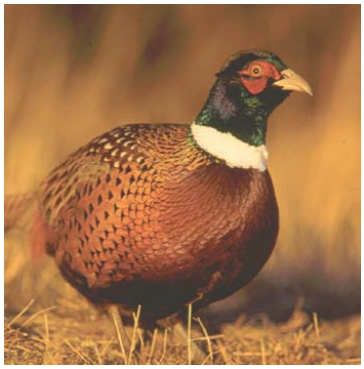
The WDFW Commission appointed "citizens ADA advisory committee" is reviewing proposed changes to improve, clarify, and update language for all hunting and fishing laws and rules pertaining to persons with disabilities. Contact Brenda Kane ADA coordinator at 360-902-2349 for more information.

Focusing On Pheasants

In Washington, there has been a wide variation in pheasant harvest and hunter participation over the past 50 years. Harvest was at its highest during the mid 1960's with another peak in the late 1970's when over 500,000 pheasants were harvested statewide. Since that time, pheasant harvest has been steadily declining. Harvest monitoring over the years indicates that pheasant populations in Washington are currently much lower than they were in the 1960's and 1970's.

In March 2003, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), in cooperation with Senator Bob Oke, Pheasants Forever, and the Big Bend Economic Development Council, held a public workshop focusing on gathering information to help identify future pheasant management strategies for Washington. Featured guest speakers included pheasant biologists from South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, and Washington D.C. In addition, a biologist from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the past president of the Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association also gave presentations. A summary of the key points of the meeting follows:

- Pheasant populations have been declining in many areas of the country. Changes in farming practices have negatively impacted pheasant habitat. Although loss of habitat may not be the only factor currently affecting populations, expert opinion is that population trends cannot be reversed until proper habitat is in place.
- Select areas to focus your efforts. It is better to identify a focus area and be successful there, than spreading yourself, or available funding, too thin.
- Pheasant management needs to take place on a large enough scale to impact populations over the long term. To focus on small, isolated parcels of habitat would be counter productive.
- In many places the most limiting habitat type is "production cover" which includes nesting and brood rearing habitat as well as escape cover. Specifically, pheasants require adequate nesting cover and sufficient insect abundance during brood rearing. Insects are often associated with diverse plant communities with a substantial forb component.
- At least 15% of the landscape must be in relatively undisturbed grass or grass-like vegetation (with a significant forb component) to resolve nest success and brood survival problems. In addition, nesting and brood-rearing habitat should have few if any trees greater than 15-feet in height to reduce the impact of avian predators.
- Evaluate what you need and then determine if you can get the funds to accomplish those tasks. If you cannot get the funding, then only try to accomplish part of what you originally wanted.
- Studies have shown that releasing penraised pheasants (both chicks in late summer and hens in the spring) for population establishment is expensive and ineffective.
- Rather than focusing on predator control, emphasis should be placed on controlling predation through providing adequate habitat.
- The 2002 Farm Bill has many programs that can help landowners improve habitat conditions for pheasants and other upland wildlife. While these programs are available, it is important for the State of Washington to work closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to make sure local and regional wildlife issues are addressed and to help landowners become involved in the programs that are applicable to their property.
- Based on hen survival and nest success, researchers have concluded that CRP in large blocks (over 40 acres) is more beneficial to pheasants than CRP buffer strips.
- Improving pheasant habitat on working lands is an important component to the overall picture. If habitat enhancement is not compatible with a farmer's operation, then there is little incentive for the landowner to participate.



- Research has shown that retaining at least 12 inches, and preferably 15 inches or more, of wheat stubble after harvesting can result in higher pheasant densities. This is primarily due to an increase in the broad-leaf, weedy habitat that occupies the field after harvest.
- Increased wheat stubble height can also help farmers produce more grain per acre due to increased moisture retention in the soil.
- Direct seeding (no-till drilling) can increase soil quality, reduce erosion and increase value of the property for wildlife.

Over the next several months, WDFW will be working to develop and begin implementing pheasant management strategies based on the information that was discussed at the workshop. Recovering pheasant numbers to levels seen in an earlier time is going to be a slow process, however, the potential of having higher numbers of pheasants in Washington certainly exists.

Mick Cope,
Upland Bird Section Manager

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ARCHERS, MUZZLELOADERS, AND MODERN FIREARM HUNTERS

In order to reduce crowding and provide a variety of hunting opportunities, deer and elk hunters in Washington have been required to choose between separate archery, muzzleloader, and modern firearm hunting seasons since 1984. This situation results in competition for allocation of hunting opportunity between the different groups.

WDFW is trying to develop more objective criteria for making decisions on which group receives new opportunity. The idea is to look at statewide participation rates for the three groups and attempt to achieve those rates in each of seventeen districts across the state. In addition, we are trying to achieve hunter harvest that is proportionate to group size. These criteria should result in better distribution of hunting opportunities and a more "equitable" way to determine which group receives available opportunity.

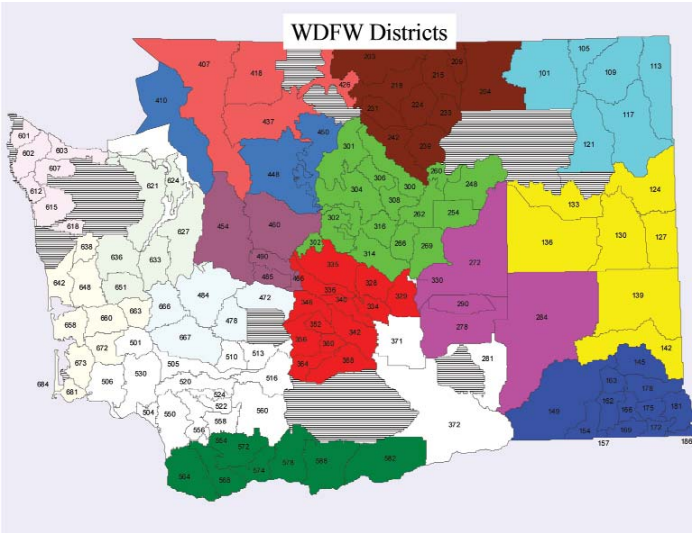
After extensive discussions with the Game Management Advisory Council, a group composed of hunters, landowners, biologists, and representatives of conservation organizations, and at public meetings with hunters across the state, guidelines were developed for providing equitable opportunity. When additional opportunity is available, the guideline is to provide that opportunity to the group that is furthest behind in participation rate or proportion of harvest. However, all groups would share reductions in opportunity, at some level, when necessary due to resource or management concerns.

The 2003-05 hunting seasons begin to adjust opportunity to achieve the equity objective. One example will be provided here, but a more compre hensive look at the results of the new hunting season package is available on the Department's website at www.wa.gov/wdfw.

The first criterion is to provide equitable opportunity for all three groups in each district. The map shown above identifies each district.

The next criterion is to determine statewide participation levels in each District. The 1998-2000, three-year averages for deer is 12.7% archery, 4.5% muzzleloader and 82.7% modern firearm. For elk the average percent of hunters is 16.8% archers, 13.4% muzzleloaders and 69.7% modern firearm.

The last criterion is to seek to equalize the proportion of harvest equal to participation, so if muzzleloaders make up 13% of the elk hunters, they should take their share or about 13% of the elk harvested (in each district). So how do the changes in the 2003 hunting season regulations for archers, muzzleloaders, and modern firearm hunters contribute to more equitable opportunities? Here is one example:



District 3 Blue Mountains (GMUs 145-186)

Deer	Statewide Participation	District Participation	Proportion of Harvest
Archers	12.7%	8.4%	5.7%
Muzzleloader	4.5%	1.6%	1.4%
Modern	82.7%	89.9%	92.9%

Changes Needed to Achieve Equity: In this district we need to increase archery participation and success and increase muzzleloader participation.

Changes made in 2003 deer hunting seasons:

Archers: increased antlerless mule deer harvest opportunity throughout the early season rather than the last two weeks; and added GMU 163 to late archery 3 pt min. or antlerless season

Muzzleloaders: added GMU 181 to the early season for 3 pt min.or antlerless; and added antlerless mule deer opportunity for GMUs 145 & 149

Modern: increased antlerless whitetail opportunity for seniors, youth, and hunters with disabilities

This example was selected because it demonstrates the equity concept pretty well. Not all districts were able to provide additional opportunity and others made more complex changes. Often, the complex changes are the result of changing resource availability, management needs, and the equity concept all combined. An example is the muzzleloader elk season in the Yakima herd (see the article in this publication)

Dave Ware,
WDFW Game Division Manager

Sign up early for a spot in rapidly filling hunter education classes

With the number of would-be students outstripping available space in some state hunter education classes, first-time hunters born after Jan. 1, 1972 should move quickly to secure a spot for the required training.

To help meet the demand, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is actively seeking additional instructors and training facilities and offers an alternative home study program.

The department offers more than 400 hunter education classes statewide. Successful completion of a hunter education course is a state requirement for hunters born after Jan. 1, 1972 who are seeking their first license. The classes, which average 17 hours in length, are taught by volunteer instructors with materials provided by WDFW. The program is funded through federal excise taxes on the sale of firearms, ammunition and some archery equipment.

Although the number of classroom slots has traditionally been sufficient to serve the number of novice hunters, demand for the training has surged dramatically in the past 18 months, according to Mik Mikitik, WDFW hunter education coordinator.

"We will add close to 100 new volunteer instructors this year, but many of those will be working to assist in existing classes," Mikitik explained. "Despite our efforts, some people will find classes full or not available in their area."

For those who wish to pursue the home study option, information on requirements and materials is available by contacting Dan Boes with the WDFW Hunter Education Program at (360) 902-8115 or emailing huntered@dfw.wa.gov/wdfw.

Mik Mikitik,
Hunter Education Coordinator

Hunter Ethics and Social Acceptance of Hunting

Ethics is defined by Webster's II Dictionary as, "a principal of right or good conduct; a system of moral-values." So what then is Hunter Ethics? Much has already been written on this subject, covering a broad range of topics such as land ethics, field conduct, sportsman-landowner relations, hunter behavior, etc. Today, more than ever, people are questioning whether hunting has a proper place in modern society.

The vast majority of our ever-increasing population is getting further removed from nature. Hollywood movies, television, video games and the Internet are replacing personal experience with a new nature "fantasy." Many kids don't even know how their hamburger got to the supermarket and they see hunting as something cruel and inhuman. Like it or not, it is so important that we recognize and appreciate other peoples views on hunting and be tolerant of their diverse views. Only in this way can we help educate others as to why hunting is so important to us and to the health of wildlife populations.

Hunters must realize that their sport is under a more critical eye than ever before. It is important to be the best we can be when afield hunting by not trespassing, picking up after ourselves, following the game laws, putting something back in the way of conservation activities, and passing these values onto the next generation. Equally important is the issue of fair chase when deciding our hunting techniques and equipment choices.

Researchers Bob Jackson and Bob Norton recognized and defined five stages of hunting. First, the "shooter stage", which is a measure of the quality of the hunt by how much shooting one gets. Second, the "limiting out stage", occurs when one gains major satisfaction from limiting out. Third, "trophy stage", comes from selective hunting. Fourth, "method stage", occurs when the taking of game becomes secondary to the method by which it is taken. Typically, the progression is from modern firearms to more challenging methods such as archery. Fifth, the "sportsman stage", is where one may be satisfied just to be out enjoying and sharing the outdoor experience. All hunters may not go through every stage and a person may be at one stage in one type of hunting and at a different stage for other kinds of hunting.

Most hunters will have slightly different goals while hunting and this fact alone may give rise to many philosophical questions. Is it socially acceptable to harvest game using any method or equipment so long as wildlife population goals are maintained? What is fair chase and who should define it? How mentally and physically challenging should hunting be? What should the hunter success rates be? Should the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife be concerned with regulating certain types of equipment such as night vision aides, "Robo" duck decoys, etc.

Ethical hunters embrace some basic principals. Here are some of my thoughts on the subject. I believe we should make our equipment choices so we humanly kill our game and not just because we get better opportunities using "primitive" methods. I believe we should take only the amount game we want to eat; not more just to win bragging rights. I believe our wildlife management practices should provide sufficient challenge to the hunt. I believe that hunters who practice shooting, scout, exercise and prepare for a hunt deserve higher success. I believe that the disabled and senior hunters deserve opportunities for good success too if they are truly putting in the effort. I believe younger hunters should have opportunities to gain experience. I believe that biology and good science should dictate wildlife management not voter initiatives. I believe methods or equipment regulations that make our sport of hunting easier are moving us in the wrong direction.

I love the sport of hunting because it challenges the very core of my being and requires me to develop and use all of my instincts, intelligence, experience, and skill. I have developed a spiritual connection with nature and the game I pursue. Remember, hunters initiated the wildlife conservation movement and it is important for us to carry on the tradition by staying involved and practicing the highest standards of hunter ethics.

Brad Johnson,
Washington Wildlife Federation

OLYMPIA - Recreational license purchasers can contribute to youth outdoor education programs under a pilot program recently undertaken by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Washington Wildlife Federation's (WWF) newly formed coalition of outdoor groups.

Each fisher and hunter who purchases a state recreational license will be able to make a voluntary, tax-deductible contribution of a dollar or more toward the youth programs.

The donated funds will be used for outdoor education activities at schools, sport shows, fairs and other events, offering skills training and hands-on fishing, shell fishing, hunting and target shooting experiences.

The pilot outdoor education partnership is being undertaken as part of WDFW's "Go Play Outside" initiative, aimed at encouraging participation in outdoor recreation activities.

Donations from license purchasers are expected to raise approximately $50,000 annually. All donations, except for an administrative fee, will go directly to the Washington Wildlife Federation for outdoor education programs. "This pilot effort taps into the knowledge, skills and enthusiasm of outdoor groups to deliver quality, hands-on outdoor education to youngsters," said WDFW Director Jeff Koenings. "By working in partnership with non-profit groups we hope to offer increased public service without a corresponding increase in the department's budget or staff."

The Washington Wildlife Federation's affiliate, the Washington Wildlife Coalition, will conduct the youth outdoor education program in cooperation with WDFW.

"Such outreach efforts offer kids outdoor experiences they might not otherwise have," said Mike Kuttel, WDFW outdoor partnerships manager. "The coalition is also committed to strengthening existing kids' fishing, hunter education and first-time hunter opportunities."

"Participation in the youth outdoor education effort is a great way to invest in our grandchildren's future," said Ed Forslof, WWF education and outreach director.

Washington Wildlife Coalition member organizations currently include the Washington State Archery Association, Evergreen Archers, the Washington State Council of Trout Unlimited, Back Country Horsemen of Washington, Camp Fire USA (Lower Columbia Council), Richland Rod and Gun Club, Washington State Federation of Fly Fishers, Inland Northwest Wildlife Council, National Wild Turkey Federation (Washington State Council), Cast for Kids Foundation, Natural Resources Youth Camp, Portland Safari Club International, Washington Hunter Education Instructors' Association, Woodland Park Zoo Wildwise, Eyes In the Woods Association, Inc., Walleyes Unlimited, Kittitas County Field and Stream Club, Washington Outfitters & Guides Association, Puget Sound Anglers N. Olympic Peninsula Chapter, and the State Board of Puget Sound Anglers.

Other organizations interested in joining the coalition should contact WWF at (360) 705-1903 or Kuttel at (360) 902-2184. More information on the pilot youth outdoor education donation concept and the "Go Play Outside" partnership can be found on the WDFW website.

Game Management Units

Have you ever wondered why big game hunting seasons are established by Game Management Units? To answer this question a little historical background is necessary.

Prior to statehood the Washington territorial government was in place and the first laws were established by the territorial legislature for the protection and management of the fish and wildlife resources of the area. In 1854 the legislative assembly of the territory of Washington enacted a law that gave the county commissioners of each and every county authority, "if they think proper," to offer a bounty for killing wild animals. This was the first law establishing wildlife management by county.

In 1899 the State Legislature authorized each county to appoint a game warden and described the duties thereof to enforce the provisions of the game laws; however, the hunting seasons were established statewide with few exceptions. In 1915 the State Legislature established all big and small game hunting seasons by county.

In 1933 the State Legislature amended the laws and included this statement. The State Game Commission is, *"To investigate the geographic, climatic and biological conditions of the various portions of the State of Washington, and to divide the state into contiguous areas of convenient size and location for administrative purposes, having the same or similar geographic, climatic, and biological conditions, which areas shall be known as game areas and designated respectively by names appropriate to their geographic location."* Hunting season pamphlets did not reflect this change until 1952 when Game Management Units were first established for deer and elk and displayed on a statewide map. There were 47 Game Management Units (GMUs) established, primarily to identify areas where special seasons were held. Not all areas of the State were included in a described GMU at the time.

The number of GMUs increased rapidly during the next ten years and by 1962 there were 97 units described. Statewide coverage was finally achieved in 1965 with 116 GMUs and 2 special "High Buck" areas. More intensive resource and people management has resulted in complexity of rules and regulations and even more GMUs and special area descriptions. Special area descriptions were primarily used to designate hunting areas with special seasons and rules to address game damage issues, population reduction, or provide additional hunting opportunity outside the established general hunting season. Prior to 1975 a number designated each GMU; however, in 1975 all GMUs were also given a name, usually after a prominent feature of the unit. The number of GMUs peaked in 1990 with 149 units and 38 special area descriptions. Currently (2003) there are 137 GMUs and 25 special area descriptions.

For the resource managers the GMUs and special area descriptions serve a valuable function. It helps them manage a specific geographic area and collect data to determine population health, harvest trends, population status, mortality, productivity and monitor harvest. It aids in the collection of consistent data to determine long-term population trends and establish hunting season recommendations. For the hunter it helps them to identify areas of interest to hunt and locate new areas. It also aids the hunter in reporting his hunting activity.

According to Jim Rieck, Game Staff Biologist, *"Game management unit numbers are used for a variety of purposes. The primary reason for a unit number is for data management. Numbers tend to take up less space than do names, are easier to key, and can be referred to in a series… The numbers are also used for data entry as a shortcut or alternative to keying the names. The data entry operator could be someone in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Information Systems staff, field staff filing out data forms, or the hunters using the automated telephone or Internet hunter report systems."*

GMUs and special area descriptions undergo boundary changes from time to time with many changes this year. Units were redefined to make boundaries easier to locate on a standard map (USGS topos) and on the ground. Department biologists try to keep significant changes to a minimum but hunters should check the current hunting pamphlet to review the change (changes are highlighted).

George K. Tsukamoto,
Staff Biologist

Accomplishments for Game Management

Game Management Plan: The greatest overall accomplishment in the past year was the completion of the first Game Management Plan. This Plan, adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission in December 2002, lays out the priorities for the next six years for hunted species. The Plan is fairly aggressive in the number and breadth of strategies to be implemented.

The Department is committed to changing the way we work with the public to ensure a better partnership as we begin implementing the Plan. The first step in this new partnership is a public meeting set for August 23rd at Central Washington University in Ellensburg. The main purpose for the meeting is to cooperatively design a process that provides better, more continuous exchange of information and ideas that leads to hunting season changes and implementation of strategies in the Plan. Watch for news releases or additional information on the Departments Web page at www.wa.gov/wdfw.

2003-05 Hunting Season Package: The new Game Management Plan drove the most significant changes to the hunting seasons. The changes resulted in expanded opportunities for senior, youth, and hunters with disabilities along with greater attention to providing balanced deer and elk hunting opportunities across the state for archers, muzzleloaders, and modern firearm hunters.

The modern firearm mule deer season in north-central Washington was extended by five days; the early archery elk season was shifted to mid-September; and several additional areas will be available for the early muzzleloader deer and elk season. In addition, the number of fall turkey permits were significantly increased, the pheasant season was shifted to a later start date, and permits are available that allow hunters to harvest two white-tailed deer, one buck and one antlerless. For more information, hunters should review the 2003 Big Game pamphlet. The 2003 Waterfowl and Upland Bird pamphlet will be available in September.

Elk Management: New studies were initiated to gather better information about the Colockum, Yakima and Blue Mountains elk herds. The Colockum study is looking at body condition of elk that is similar to past studies in western Washington and the Yakima herd. The idea is to find out why productivity is relatively poor in this herd.

With the recent completion of the Yakima elk herd plan, a major study has been initiated between the U.S. Forest Service, the Yakama tribe, and WDFW to ultimately determine whether there is enough habitat to support the number of elk in that herd. The study in the Blue Mountains is in cooperation with the Nez Perce and Umatilla tribes to look at mortality factors. This herd has been significantly below population objective for many years and this mortality study is designed to help determine ways to increase the herd. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Eyes in the Woods, Inland Northwest Wildlife Council, and other organizations provided funding and volunteer support for these projects.

Cougar & Black Bear Management: Two biologists were hired to address human/dangerous wildlife interactions and cougar and black bear population management. They are developing long term strategies and responding to incidents in chronic problem areas, developing educational programs, and monitoring the impacts of hunting and removal strategies. Aggressive tactics to address increasing cougar populations appear to be working with recent evidence of population declines and reduced complaint levels. See the cougar article in this publication for more information.

Pheasant Workshop: A group of midwest pheasant experts were asked to share ideas with Washington regarding how to address our problems. The Department organized a public forum where hunters, the organization Pheasants Forever, landowners, biologists, and participants ultimately developed a set of recommendations for what can be done in the future.

The main points of the recommendations are: to work very closely with Federal farm programs to fund activities that are beneficial to pheasants; to focus attention and funding in key geographic areas where success can be realized; to identify the limiting factors or bottlenecks in these areas that are keeping the pheasant population from growing; to develop partnerships with farmers and other conservation groups to find mutually beneficial techniques of providing pheasant habitat; and that production habitat (nesting and brood rearing) has been identified as most limiting through pheasant range.

Private Lands Review: Hunters have identified access and wildlife habitat enhancement on private lands as a significant issue. A stakeholders group has been formed to provide recommendations to the Department on improving existing programs and/or developing new ones. Members include farmers, farming organizations, timberland owners, hunting and conservation organizations, current participants in Department programs, and the Northwest Indian Fish Commission. The group has been focusing on review of the state's Private Lands Wildlife Management Areas as a first step. They are scheduled to provide recommendations on this part of the Department's private lands program later this summer. Watch for additional information from the Department in September.

Bighorn Sheep Augmentation: Forty bighorn sheep captured in Oregon and Nevada were relocated to central and eastern Washington to boost low-population herds. This is an effort to bolster population growth and enhance genetic variability in some of our herds that are below management objectives. Funding was provided by the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep and through Washington's auction and raffle of sheep tags.

Ten bighorns were released in the Sinlahekin area of Okanogan County, five were released in the Mount Hull area of Okanogan County, five were released in the Tieton River area of Yakima County, eight bighorns were released in the Whitestone area, seven in the Lincoln Cliffs area along Lake Roosevelt in northern Lincoln County, and five were released in the Vulcan Mountain area of Ferry County.

Tons of Turkeys!

Wild turkey fall hunting permits increased 45 percent this season over 2002, thanks to a fast-growing turkey population in northeast Washington.

A total of 2,175 permits were offered this year, compared to 1,425 last year – a 650 permit increase. Most of those new permits are in the Roosevelt, Huckleberry, 49 Degrees North, Selkirk, Aladdin, Douglas, Kelly Hill and Sherman game management units.

If turkey populations continue this trend, permit levels will remain high next year. So if you didn't apply this time around, keep fall turkey hunting in mind next summer to make the late June application deadline.

WHO – ME?

Yes, you and all the rest of us who traipse the hills and dells reveling in outdoor recreation. Sooner or later, in a careless or unthinking moment, we neglect something or do something, which breaches the boundaries of courteous treatment of others.

A famous person in writing to a friend once said, "Politeness costs nothing and gains everything," and in this simple statement lays the answer to many of the problems facing us all today.

It is human to resent and rebel against a discourteous act, whether it is intentional or not. Even small, individually unimportant actions can leaven a feeling of irritation, especially when magnified through numerous repetitions. This is the basic reason why the sportsmen of today are being faced with more and more "No Trespassing" signs in their hunting areas. And this is why it is time for all of us who love the great outdoors to start wiping the mud from our own feet before asking the other fellow to shine his shoes.

To be courteous is the normal act of a gentleman. It does not require greatness, intellect, wealth or effort. This automatically embraces most of us. Many of us could well use a little more polish if we want to brighten the surface of our daily contacts with our fellow beings. To gain respect and friendship, and all the enjoyment that come from such rewards, we need only to be considerate of others, to respect their feelings and property, and we have become gentlemen and sportsmen, regardless of race, creed, or position in life.

We are geared today to a fast pace of living. We travel faster-go farther-and try to cram a few precious hours of recreation in between our workday efforts. But recreation itself is something that should not be hurried. Our haste should not be so great that we overlook or by-pass those little things which not only enhance our pleasures, but also gain friendships which in the long run are far more valuable than the fleeting moment it took to make a friendly gesture of courtesy.

A "Thank you" to the landowner who permits us to park on his property and use his lands and waters-a greeting to the fellow sportsman we meet-a helpful hint to the novice who appreciates the outdoors as much as we do but doesn't know how to reap its full benefits-these are small things individually but they bear the brand of courtesy.

We should all remember these things when we go afield. They are important. They are as much a part of our pastimes as the equipment we buy to use. The response we get from others depends on them. We eagerly check our gear and impatiently await the hour we are to use it. Let's not spoil any part of our outing by leaving a scowl behind us when our day is ended.

It takes only a moment to close a gate behind us-a few seconds to clean up our lunch debris or police the camp we're leaving-a minute to express our appreciation to our host the landowner. The time spent in sowing these seeds of gentlemanly conduct will reap a harvest of reciprocal friendships between landowners and sportsmen throughout the years to come, and will open the way for us all to have a continuation of our outdoor pleasures in the future. Reprinted from (Anonymous, Game Bulletin, Washington Game Department. April 1954. Vol. 6, No. 2).

Big Game and Turkey Harvest Information

Deer, Elk, Bear, and Turkey Harvest

Big game and turkey harvest information provides some of the most useful data for wildlife managers to evaluate game animal population status. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) uses a mandatory reporting procedure to estimate the harvest of deer, elk, bear, and turkey. Data for the 2001 hunting season (Table 1) shows some interesting facts that most hunters may not be aware of. Perhaps the most surprising fact is that all user groups, modern firearm, muzzleloader and archery hunters enjoy similar success rates during the general hunting seasons. If the special permit harvest is added to that of the general hunting season, modern firearm and muzzleloader success rates climb somewhat. Muzzleloader deer and elk hunters currently enjoy the highest success rate while archery deer and modern firearm elk hunters have the lowest success rates.

Table 1. General Hunting Season Success Rate

2001 General Deer Hunting Season	Deer Tags Purchased	Deer Hunters	Antlered Harvest	Antlerless Harvest	Total Harvest	Hunter Success
Modern Firearm	134,997	116,881	27,751	2,851	30,602	26.2%
Archery	18,436	16,154	1,816	1,915	3,731	23.1%
Muzzleloader	8,518	6,999	1,257	769	2,026	28.9%
General Season Totals	**161,951**	**140,034**	**30,824**	**5,535**	**36,359**	**26.0%**

2001 General Elk Hunting Season	Elk Tags Purchased	Elk Hunters	Antlered Harvest	Antlerless Harvest	Total Harvest	Hunter Success
Modern Firearm	69,071	50,178	3,089	209	3,298	6.6%
Archery	15,776	13,188	399	814	1,213	9.2%
Muzzleloader	12,885	9,868	432	527	959	9.7%
General Season Totals	**97,732**	**73,234**	**3,920**	**1,550**	**5,470**	**7.5%**

Table 2. Special Permit Hunting Season Success Rates

2002 Permit Summary	Permits Issued	Number of Hunters Applying	Reports Returned	Percent Returned	Hunters	Antlered (or males) Killed	Antlerless (or females) Killed	Total Killed	Hunter Success
Deer	13,139	30,834	11,742	89.4%	9,003	1,304	3,538	4,842	53.8%
Elk	7,107	38,487	6,404	90.1%	5,382	429	1,320	1,749	32.5%
Sheep	22	6,364	21	95.5%	21	21	0	21	100.0%
Moose	96	9,817	93	96.9%	91	53	29	82	90.1%
Goat	23	4,936	23	100.0%	22	7	2	19	86.4%
Bear	06	562	96	90.6%	72	18	12	30	41.7%
Turkey	1,425	2,179	1,298	91.1%	1,126	217	256	473	42.0%
Totals	**21,918**	**93,179**	**19,677**	**89.8%**	**15,717**	**2,059**	**5,157**	**7,216**	**45.9%**

Harvest statistics for the 2002 hunting seasons are not yet available (July 2003) because of late and low hunter reporting rate. Ideally, everyone would submit the hunter reports and do it on time. The deadline is set so that complete and accurate information can be made available to wildlife biologists, hunters, and the Fish and Wildlife Commission for use while establishing the hunting seasons for the coming year.

In order for the reports to be reliable and useful, around 90 percent of the reports have to be submitted by the deadline. If that is not done, a follow-up survey needs to be conducted. Because around 30 percent of the hunter reports were not made on time, a sample of the hunters with outstanding reports is made by telephone in order to calculate the harvest success rate of those who did not report. This estimate is added to the tabulated mandatory reports to determine the harvest and hunter participation figures.

Secial Permit Hunting Harvest

In addition to the deer and elk general hunting seasons, there are special permit hunts, which make it possible to hunt antlerless deer or elk, in special areas, or during special times. Mountain goat, bighorn sheep, and moose hunting are available only by special permit. The same is true for spring black bear and fall turkey. Harvest for these species is tabulated and based solely upon the reports returned by the hunters. Harvest is not estimated to include hunters who did not submit a report.

Cougar – Though it is required to have a cougar transport tag to hunt cougar, it is only necessary to report cougar hunting activity if a cougar is taken. If a cougar is taken, the head and pelt must be presented for inspection to an authorized WDFW employee. A tooth sample is collected and the WDFW employee is responsible to report the harvest to Wildlife Program staff in Olympia. These reports are used to establish the minimum reported cougar harvest figure presented in the Game Harvest Report.

Game Harvest Report

The Department of Fish and Wildlife publishes game harvest statistics each year. Many hunters find this information useful. Printed reports are available for a minimal fee at Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife regional offices or the Olympia headquarters. The report can also be viewed or downloaded from the Department of Fish and Wildlife Internet site at www.wa.gov/wdfw.

Jim Rieck,
Game Harvest Manager

Muzzleloader Hunting in the Yakima Area - Why the changes??

The 2002 hunting season marked the end of a 3-year hunting regulation cycle. One of the goals for the 2003-05 seasons was “equalization” among user groups. Equalization means dividing up the harvest by user group size within each district. For example, if the user group makes up 14% of the hunters, they should harvest approximately 14% of the animals. This concept has already been instituted for quality (branched bull and buck) permits.

Muzzleloader hunters in the Yakima area comprised 14% of the elk hunters (compared to 13% statewide) and harvested 17% of the elk from 1999-01. The initial 2002 figures indicated muzzleloader success was even higher than the previous 3-year average. However, trying to equalize harvest in a small number of units with many variables is difficult. Hunters often complained about over crowding in the few muzzleloader elk units that were open. Making the late antlerless hunts “permit only” was also an unpopular option. After consulting with local hunting organizations, the preferred choice was opening more units to spike only and balancing the remainder of the harvest with antlerless permits. For the next 3 years, 8 units will be open rather than 3. All 8 units will have antlerless permits. Unfortunately, there was a conflict in GMU 346 with quality modern bull permits and it could not be open to a general muzzleloader season. GMU 364 was left, as a quality hunt unit where only those drawing a bull permit would be hunting.

Muzzleloader deer hunters in the Yakima area comprised 1% of the user group (compared to 5% statewide). The few muzzleloader deer hunters took approximately 2% of the deer. The goal was to increase the number of muzzleloader deer hunters in the Yakima area. Having the opportunity to hunt deer and elk at the same time seemed popular with local hunters. The same 8 units open for elk will be open for deer on the same 7 days for the next 3 years. Antlerless permits will be used to equalize harvest.

Cooperative Management Of Wrangel Island Snow Geese

Washington is the winter home to several unique populations of waterfowl with international management significance. One of these populations, Wrangel Island lesser snow geese, breeds on Wrangel Island off the northeast coast of Siberia, and most spend the winter on the Skagit Delta near Mount Vernon and the Fraser Delta near Vancouver BC. A smaller segment of the population continues down the flyway to wintering areas in California's Central Valley.

Due to a combination of factors involving poor production, over harvest, and pressures on the breeding grounds, the population declined from over 150,000 birds to less than 60,000 in the 1970's. The population is greatly affected by spring and summer weather conditions and predators on the Arctic breeding grounds, and in some years no goslings are produced on the breeding colony. During the last seven years, production has been good, and the population has been increasing toward the management objective of 120,000. Recent surveys of snow geese indicate that the breeding population is currently at 110,000 and the Skagit-Fraser flock is approximately 70,000 birds. Over the past twenty years, a larger percentage of the population has been wintering in the Skagit-Fraser area.

Snow geese on Fir Island/Hayton Game Reserve

The population is managed separately from other North American lesser snow goose populations, some of which have become overabundant and are impacting Arctic breeding areas. Unlike these eastern populations, the Wrangel Island population has not shown the same threat of degrading its Arctic breeding grounds, and the population has been given protection on spring migration areas during expanded snow goose hunting seasons in the Central Flyway.

Cooperative management programs involving WDFW, other Pacific Flyway State agencies, Canadian Wildlife Service, and the Wrangel Island Nature Reserve, are detailed in a joint plan developed by the Pacific Flyway Council.

The population was one of the key species identified in the Pacific Coast Joint Venture's First Step habitat acquisition and enhancement program. In 1994, a 255-acre parcel on Fir Island near Conway was secured through federal and state grants to WDFW, to provide critical upland feeding habitat adjacent to the estuary. A total of 500 acres are managed as the Fir Island / Hayton Game Reserve, which has become a popular viewing area and serves to maintain hunting opportunities on adjacent lands.

Don Kraege,
WDFW Waterfowl Section Manager

Genetic Structure of Washington State Elk Herds

Washington State has ten elk herds that encompass the ranges of both the Roosevelt and Rocky Mountain subspecies. The management and viability of each of these herds depend, in part, on the degree to which individuals immigrate from one herd to another. For example, if there is no immigration between two herds, the herds are genetically isolated and changes in the numbers of individuals within each of these herds would be a function of their respective birth and death rates. However, if immigration occurs freely between these two herds they may behave as a single population and changes in the numbers of individuals within each of these herds would be a function of birth, death, and immigration rates. Because monitoring and affecting the number of individuals in wildlife populations such as elk herds is a responsibility of resource agencies, wildlife managers are keenly interested in understanding the geographic structure of populations and in quantifying immigration rates. Specifically in Washington State, one aspect of the geographic structure of elk herds is their subspecific composition; that is, the percentage of individuals that are of Rocky Mountain or Roosevelt descent.

There are two basic methods we can use to determine if individuals are moving among particular elk herds. The direct method involves marking individuals animals and surveying entire populations to determine the movement patterns of the marked animals. This method is logistically tenuous and extremely costly. A more cost-effective method is to indirectly quantify migration patterns by genetically characterizing each herd, first to determine the degree to which the herd is composed of Rocky Mountain versus Roosevelt individuals, and then to determine the amount of immigration or gene flow among the herds. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), in collaboration with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, initiated a project in 2001 to study the genetic structure of Washington elk herds. With the assistance of some of the state's elk hunters, volunteer organizations such as Eyes in the Woods, and tribal biologists, we obtained blood or muscle tissue samples from 345 elk representing nine herds within Washington, including elk from both Rocky Mountain and Roosevelt subspecies.

There are a variety of genetic techniques and molecular markers that can used to investigate differences among populations of elk. For this project we used a molecular marker known as microsatellites. Microsatellites are pieces of DNA that do not produce proteins or any other product used by an organism, and mutate or change at a fairly high rate. To our knowledge, all animal species, including humans, have microsatellite DNA. An array of microsatellite markers can produce a genetic fingerprint that can be used to identify individual animals, or, with all individuals from a population taken collectively, can help determine if two or more populations (or herds of elk) are genetically "connected" through immigration. The degree to which populations (or herds) are genetically connected is a measure of how many individuals immigrate among these populations.

Our first goal in studying the genetic structure of Washington elk herds was to genetically characterize each of the state's herds as being composed of either Rocky Mountain or Roosevelt individuals. Although we have collected sufficient data from only a few herds, preliminary results from our genetic analyses indicate that there are relatively large genetic distances between Rocky Mountain and Roosevelt elk, with all herds north and east of Mount Rainier (North Rainier, Colockum, Nooksack, Selkirk, and Yakima herds) composed mostly of Rocky Mountain elk, while the coastal herd (Olympic herd) is composed of Roosevelt elk. Two herds (St. Helens and Hanford herds) situated between these Rocky Mountain and Roosevelt herds are of mixed descent. Furthermore, these data also suggest that the elk herds in Washington are geographically structured, with some herds exchanging individual migrants, while other herds appear to be geographically and genetically isolated. However, more samples need to be collected from each of the herds and additional data need to be analyzed before these results can be confirmed.

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